

The Telegraph

Dale Farm clearance stopped after bats found

The final stages of the Dale Farm site clearance have been halted after police discovered evidence of bats living in the remaining caravans.



Travellers leaving the Dale Farm site, where bats have been found living in caravans

3:17PM BST 25 Oct 2011

Basildon Council has now been forced to suspend the removal of static homes until more conclusive evidence can be found.

The twist in the decade-long saga happened yesterday when a police officer found bat droppings on the six-acre site near Crays Hill, Essex.

Wildlife experts believe that bats could be living in the rafters of remaining static caravans on Dale Farm.

The development is a massive blow to Basildon Council which has been making swift progress to return the land back to green belt after travellers and protestors gave up on their battle last week.

However, hopes that the discovery could lead to a permanent reprieve for travellers were dashed when the authority continued with its work to remove concrete hard standing from the illegal plots.

Dale Farm eviction: as it happened (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/8835560/Dale-Farm-eviction-as-it-happened.html>)

Dale Farm: travellers leave in 'mass exodus' (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/8835560/Dale-Farm-eviction-as-it-happened.html>)

Dale Farm turns into 'war zone' as police evict travellers
(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/8836337/Dale-Farm-turns-into-war-zone-as-riot-police-evict-travellers.html>)

Dale Farm activists, not travellers, are villains
(<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/edwest/100112083/dale-farm-it-is-the-activists-not-the-travellers-who-are-the-villains/>)

Police crush Dale Farm site after 10-year wait
(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/greenpolitics/planning/8837455/Dale-Farm-police-invasion-at-dawn-ends-10-year-battle-with-travellers.html>)

The long-running battle of Dale Farm (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/8835664/The-long-running-battle-of-Dale-Farm.html>)

The latest wildlife find followed claims that newts had also been discovered on the site.

That development led to allegations that activists had brought the creatures onto the land in a desperate bid to halt the bulldozers.

A council spokesman said: "Following claims of newts being found we had another look and again there was no evidence of newts or bats.

"But because of confusion around our report about bats with the police, we have brought in the independent surveyors."

Stuart Hardwicke-Carruthers, travellers' campaigner, said he is "convinced" bats are on the site.

He said: "The council has had to stop moving the static homes because of bats and a full survey will be carried out on Tuesday."

"And if that survey shows up the newts, which have already been found, they will also have to stop digging up the hardstanding on a number of pitches."

Basildon Council has this week confirmed it has not received any homelessness applications from the evicted travellers.

And Essex Police said they have not had any reports of caravans pitching up nearby, despite the travellers' claims that they would have nowhere to go after the eviction.

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